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## THE POLISH-RUSSIAN PACT

BY JAN STANCZYK

Polish Minister of Labor, Leader of Polish Labor Movement

**T**HE Polish-Russian pact was hailed with sincere satisfaction by all nations fighting Germany, and by their Governments. Poles abroad, especially those in the United States, received it with great joy.

To one million Polish citizens living in Russia, it is a charter of liberty. To them the pact is an all important event, it has entirely revolutionized the conditions of life for them.

In Poland itself, our people look upon the pact as a most favorable move for Poland's liberation. Before the pact was signed, conditions were tragic in the extreme. Half of Poland was under German domination, half under Russian. All Poles, whether in Poland or abroad, asked themselves in great anxiety and alarm:

"Once Germany is defeated, what will happen to part of our country now occupied by the Soviets?"

None of us was naive enough to hope that having beaten Germany, Great Britain and the United States would declare war against the Soviets to liberate that part of Poland which was under the latter's occupation.

On the other hand, exhausted by war and the dual occupation, Poland would not be strong enough to fight the Soviet Union to recover the part of our country Russia had occupied.

The Russo-German war and the occupation by the Germans of the whole of Poland have created a new situation, advantageous to Poland. The Soviets, attacked by Germany, have become the ally

of Great Britain which is Poland's ally. In fact the Soviet Union has become the ally of the United States and of all the countries fighting against Germany.



JAN STANCZYK

War with the Soviets is destroying German power, it brings victory nearer, it hastens the liberation of Poland. So the Polish Government could not allow a state of war between Poland and Russia to continue, for that would have been contrary to our own interest and harmful to our struggle for freedom.

Poland could not do less than form a common front with her British ally, with the United States and the other nations fighting Germany. That is why the Polish Government accepted the suggestions made to them and to the Soviets by the British Government, that they should arrive at a mutual understanding. Having at heart the real interests of Poland, the Polish Government could not possibly have rejected the proposed pact.

Only people of little faith, can find fault with the conclusion of the pact. Fortunately, they are not numerous, those who still dream of a reactionary Poland, of a Poland of the September defeat, of a Poland with a totalitarianism of her own.

These men tried to spread foolish and misleading rumors to the effect that the Polish Government had renounced Poland's right to her Eastern frontiers of 1939. Yet not only the Polish-Russian Pact,

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# JAN STANCZYK

## A Polish Labor Leader

**J**AN STANCZYK, Minister of Labor and Social Welfare, was formerly a skilled mechanic. He is fifty years old.

The son of a peasant-farmer who barely eked out a living for himself and his family on a five acres farm, Jan ran away from the soil to the city when only eleven years old, so as not to be a burden to his father. He started work as a locksmith's apprentice and was soon a skilled artisan.

Stanczyk did not stay long in Austria. He went to Germany where by his zeal and activity as a labor organizer, he soon attracted the attention not only of the proletariat but also of the German police. Arrested the first time for the crime of "high treason"—he often revisited German prisons.

As an Austrian soldier during the first world war, he was assigned to work in the well-known Skoda arms factory in Czechoslovakia. There his skill as an artificer and arms worker, was duplicated by his activity in organizing opposition against the Austrian government. The forty thousand workmen of the Skoda factory were subject to a military regime. The big establishment was so thoroughly militarized that the workers did not receive regular wages, but only soldiers' pay. They had to observe military discipline and in case of insubordination were tried by courts martial.

So Stanczyk organized a secret workers' committee. The authorities learned of it. Two workmen were arrested and sentenced to ten years hard labor. That led to the first war strike in Austria—

Stanczyk was one of its leaders. The day following the trial, the workers came to work but did nothing. The strike quickly spread to other plants, and by night 100,000 men were on strike. Stanczyk addressed a mass meeting which ended in a great political demonstration and closed with the workers singing the Czechish patriotic anthem "Kde domov moj."

This was in 1916. Thereafter Stanczyk increased his activities, remaining in close contact with illegal organizations. In 1918, after a speech delivered in the Vienna arsenal, he was arrested and sentenced to death. His comrades received ten year sentences. The collapse of Austria and the revolution saved his life.

In independent Poland, Stanczyk rapidly became one of the leaders of the trade-union movement. He was elected to parliament and became the Secretary General of the Mineworkers Union, the most powerful Polish labor organization, and vice-president of the Polish Labor Unions Congress. He frequently represented Polish labor at International Conventions. He was its delegate at the International Labor Office conferences. Very popular in international labor circles, he was elected vice-president of the International Mineworkers organization. In the political area he always fought for Polish democracy.

The outbreak of the war found him in Paris. There he became a member of the Polish Government of National Union.

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but also the note of the British Government, and the declaration of the American Secretary of State, Cordell Hull, and more recently the joint declaration of the British and American Governments, all of them, emphasized the principle that no frontier changes accomplished by means of violence during the present war will ever be recognized.

Yet these men actually put forward the argument that Poland did not obtain specific guarantees regarding her frontiers either from the Soviet Union or from England. Of course she did not! That applies not only to the Polish-Soviet Pact, but to any pact ever concluded. There has never been a pact guaranteeing anybody's frontiers forever. A frontier dispute might arise some time in the future between Poland and the Soviet Union. If it cannot be settled by direct negotiation or by arbitration, the decision will then depend not upon some pact, but upon the general political situation and the mutual ratio of strength.

It is our hope and desire that the pact be of real value not only during this war; but that, adhered to loyally by both parties, it may mark the beginning of a new era in the mutual relations of Poland and Russia, two free and independent

countries that as neighbors have many important interests in common.

We must not forget that Germany, because of her political organization, will always be a dangerous neighbor to Poland and Russia. Imperialism is inborn to Germany. A strong Poland and a strong Russia, maintaining harmonious relations, may be effective as a warning to Germany against attacking them or other countries. For the world now knows that Germany respects force and force only.

Appraising the value of the Polish-Russian Pact, one must also consider that by signing it Poland has greatly strengthened her position with the nations fighting Hitler. This is of paramount importance, because Germany's defeat is a prerequisite of Poland's independence.

The praise of powerful organizations like the British Labor Party and the British Trade Unions Congress, expressing the affection and admiration of the British people for Poland, is a proof that we have acted wisely, that we have acted in the best interest of our nation, and in the common interest of the Allies.

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# TRADE UNIONS IN POLAND

**L**ABOR UNIONS have been an important factor of Polish public life, ever since the industrial development of the country in the latter part of the NINETEENTH Century led to a rapid expansion of the working classes. The 70th anniversary of Polish Labor Unionism would have been celebrated in 1940, if the occupation had not interfered with these plans. Polish Labor Unionism is much younger, of course, than the British labor movement; but in age it corresponds honorably with Labor Movements elsewhere, although in many countries of Europe the industrial system developed much earlier than in Poland.

The dismemberment of Poland had created before the first World War wholly different conditions of life in each of the three parts of the country. These various conditions influenced the development of public institutions to a high degree. Labor Unions were no exception to this rule. In Austrian Poland they enjoyed almost complete freedom. In Prussian Poland, on condition of using the German language in their proceedings, they were comparatively free. In Russian Poland they were at first completely banned and later only tolerated under the suspicious eye of the Czarist police—or obliged to go underground to escape its vigilance.

## ACTIVITIES IN INDEPENDENT POLAND

The restoration of Poland in 1918 and the establishment of a Republican form of Government made it possible to merge the three branches of Polish Labor Unionism. Membership of all unions increased rapidly enabling them to lead the movement for higher wages and better working conditions. Collective bargaining was soon recognized as the best possible principle; it obviated conflict and led

to the attainment of labor's aspirations. But it would be a mistake to assume that collective bargaining itself and Labor's other achievements, did not have to be fought for. Polish Labor Unions were always keen to obtain the results they desired through peaceful negotiation with the industrial interests and the public authorities concerned. But they were always ready to use the strike weapon whenever this was the only way toward the achievement of Labor's just aims, or to prevent curtailment of Labor's acquired rights. Strikes for Union recognition were however the most important ones.

But Polish labor never looked upon economic conflict as the real aim or principal form of its activities. Much of their energy was devoted to large scale educational work among their members, and the Unions were helpful in organizing cooperative establishments. Both educational and cooperative work was engaged in, partly by the Labor Unions themselves,

partly by special Associations organized under the auspices of the Polish Labor Unions Congress. The results of the Union's educational activities were particularly good and were highly appreciated throughout the country. The Polish Labor Unions Congress contributed largely by its efforts and funds, to the work of scientific organizations concerned with research work in connection with labor conditions and especially with factory accidents.

## POLITICAL ASPECTS

The Polish Labor Unions have always been a stronghold of political freedom in the country. Although completely non-political themselves they always supported the Democratic and Progressive

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Ruins of Polish Labor Paper in Warsaw



# SPEAKING TO POLAND . . .

The Rt. Hon. Clement R. Attlee, M.P., leader of the British Labor Party, broadcast the following message to Poland on May 1st, 1941:—

*We greet you, Workers of Poland! We do not forget that you were the first to resist in arms the Nazi tyranny which seeks to enslave the whole world. We rejoice in the presence here of free Poles who on land, sea and in the air are so splendidly maintaining the spirit of Poland. We know that their brothers and sisters in the homeland are not submitting tamely to the foreign invader and are not losing confidence in the resurrection of Poland which shall surely be.*

*Wherever the totalitarian regime is introduced, the first victim is liberty: liberty of speech, liberty of conscience and liberty of free association. It was characteristic of the evil thing which we are fighting that its earliest acts were the complete destruction of all the Labor organizations which the German workers had built up for their defence. It was the same in Italy and in every other country where the Axis has power.*

*Poland will take her rightful place in the great association of free peoples. She will claim that place because she has sought freedom and honor rather than inglorious servitude.*

*We of the British Labor movement greet the Polish nation. We greet the Polish peasants and workers and are confident that when the day of deliverance dawns and when mankind enters upon a new era of peace and social justice we shall see them at our side in a Poland, free, prosperous and happy.*

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The assurances given us by British Labor leaders that Poland's liberation is a matter of honor for England, are more valuable to us than any written formula. History teaches us that governments come and go, but nations are eternal and their feelings not easily changed.

The British laboring classes are working and fighting for the very aims and ideals for which the Polish people are fighting and suffering.

We firmly believe that Poland will not only be independent, but really free and democratic. We feel sure that in post war Poland the people will be the masters of their own rights and decisions, and be as free and independent as the British people are and will remain, on whose victory hang the destinies of Poland and of all other countries occupied by Hitler.

The Rt. Hon. Sir Walter Citrine, General Secretary of the British Trade Unions' Congress, wrote the following foreword to "Slavery Under Hitler's New Order":—

*Hitler seeks to impose upon the world a universal feudal system in which the Nazis will be the overlords of conquered nations. This is what the New Order means, whatever camouflage may be used. It is scientifically planned. For each invaded nation a special, technique of domination. For Poland, however, prostrate at the feet of the foe, no mercy! A contemptuous calculating degradation; the destruction of all the liberty which Poland had created for herself!*

*With impartiality the writer does not hide the fact that Governments in Poland sometimes employed authoritarian methods. But the fact remains that before the war Trade Unions existed in Poland. They belonged to our International Federation of Trade Unions. We, the British, often conferred with them. On occasions we gathered together in their country at Warsaw and other places. Their representatives came regularly to meetings of the I.L.O. at Geneva and freely spoke their mind at conferences there. These Unions have all been suppressed. The Gestapo has confiscated their property. Today the Polish workers are completely without the protection of their organizations, and as a consequence a flood of social evils and inhuman conditions has rushed in upon them.*

*One day these wrongs will be redressed, and the lost countries restored. That will be when the Nazis' military power is broken to pieces. To help forward that purpose is the duty of all men and women who cherish the freedom of the human soul.*

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This truth must be understood by the few reactionaries among us who still cling to the illusion that out of the present bloody struggle a world of privileges for the few and of social wrongs for the masses will emerge.

No! That world will never come back.

A new world is being born: a world of peace, equality and justice, a world of constructive work and prosperity for all — a world of new social, political and economic values and character.

Those who do not understand or do not want to understand this truth, are unfortunate relics of an era that has perished forever on the fields of battle, of an era cursed by the nations for the crimes and suffering that war has brought upon the masses—upon the millions who want to be free, to work in peace and enjoy the fruits of their honest labor.

# UNDERGROUND IN POLAND



Raids, arrests, firing squads  
fail to halt Polish patriots

**R**ECENT developments, brought to light by the ever increasing amount of information available about the unrest among the oppressed nations in Europe, show how dangerous to Hitler are the activities of the "third front" with which his hordes must now cope. This front fights underground and its offensives are led by organized groups, keenly conscious of their aims, and supported by the growing, open revolt of all enslaved peoples under the bloody Nazi rule.

For weeks now the American press has fully reported the increasing wave of resistance. Headlines tell of the spreading revolt in Europe and foreshadow the hour of open rebellion. The true facts of German atrocities, mass arrests, mass executions, mass deportations and expulsions, concentration camps, are known to every reader. They prove that Hitler, realizing the dangers of the underground movement, has set out to crush every phase of it by terrorism of the most barbaric and inhuman character.

The European revolution has not yet assumed the form of a general uprising against the German occupants and, in view of existing conditions, is unlikely to do so in the near future. The fact remains, however, that the tide of resistance grows daily in all conquered countries.

Fully aware of the Gestapo efforts to provoke sporadic and premature revolt, we must watch the stages of increased resistance in each particular country, and on a basis of comparison, gauge the

strength, vigor, and patriotic character of the various underground movements.

## V.V.V.

Poland was the first nation to resist German aggression. Poland was also the first nation to start a mass underground movement. Immediately following Poland's military defeat, wherever one or two Poles were gathered together, wherever men met or were thrown into contact by the events of war—initial steps were taken to form a secret organization. Every Pole became a conspirator. These groups were all inspired by certain common principles:

1. Consciousness of the fact that all was not lost and that preparations must be made for continued resistance under new conditions.

2. Clear, intelligent, constructive criticism of the past, with a true realization of the failure of undemocratic and totalitarian principles.

3. Appreciation of the value of Democracy and realization that Poland's fate is closely linked to that of world democracy.

These three basic principles must impress every one who reads the "Manifesto to the Peoples of the World," published recently in Poland, and widely reprinted in the American press under the title, "Underground Poland Speaks."

The brutal methods of wholesale extermination, the premeditated mass arrests and executions, the

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# SLAVERY OF THE POLISH WORKERS UNDER HITLER'S "NEW ORDER"

**N**OWHERE is the enslavement of the workers in German-occupied countries so much in evidence as in Poland. The first country to be subjected by the Nazis to military attack, it has become the actual testing ground for their "New Order."

The Polish worker has been reduced to a state of serfdom, robbed of his political rights, deprived of his Trade Unions and other protective organizations. All that, by dint of long and untiring effort, he had achieved in the way of social reform and improvements in his standard of life, has been ruthlessly swept away.

Something like a million Polish workers have been deported to Germany as forced labor. The Germans themselves admit the figure of 798,000. Those remaining at home have to work at starvation wage rates, for the benefit of the German overlord, in a Polish industry which is now part of the German war machine.

## *A MILLION DEPORTED TO GERMANY*

The transfer of a million men and women to work in Germany, states the circular, is an essential part of this plan, as is also the appropriation of Poland's natural resources, the aim being to make Poland a granary and a source of man-power for the sole benefit of the Reich. Food rations for the Poles must be so reduced that large surpluses of grain and other foodstuffs can be made available for the needs of the German Army and Administration. Forest lands must be stripped without

regard for their future, in order to feed the Reich war-machine with its timber requirements. Industrial plants, of no immediate use to Germany, are to be scrapped to provide iron for the German blast-furnaces.

The peasant must be forced to supply a fixed quota of his products to the German authorities. The worker must work longer hours.

The ultimate object was to reduce Poland to a backward, agricultural hinterland for Germany. This scheme was modified, however, when the British R.A.F. activities began to be felt in the German industrial regions of the west. The Germans then began feverishly to re-equip the Polish war industries and these are now utilized extensively for their war effort. A number of German engineers and supervisors have been sent to Poland for this purpose.

Thus the entire economic system of Poland has been adjusted to the needs of the German war-machine, and, in the event of a German victory, there can be no hope of any amelioration after the war, since Poland will have been denuded of its vital industries and will remain an agricultural country, producing under German supervision for Germany's sole benefit. The Polish slave will be allowed only the minimum of food and other requisites to maintain life and keep him at work.

## *TRADE UNIONS SUPPRESSED*

When the Polish Republic came into being in November, 1918, the first Prime Minister, Ignacy

Daszynski, announced an extensive programme of social reforms. In the first few months many far-reaching measures were adopted for the benefit of the workers, including a 46-hour week, liberal Trade Union legislation, factory inspection, compulsory health insurance, etc. Later, in 1921, the Constitution prohibited work by children under 15 years of age and holidays with pay were voted by Parliament. Employment of women and young persons in industry, especially in mining and



Polish School boys working under armed German Guards.



transport, was limited by law. Expectant mothers had the right to absent themselves from work during the critical period and were not allowed to be employed for a period of six weeks after the birth of the child. They were also entitled to medical assistance and to 60 per cent of their pay from the Health Insurance until they resumed work.

Much of the progressive social legislation achieved in the first few years of the Republic remained intact, only to be ruthlessly suppressed by the Nazi invader.

**The Trade Unions were of Germany's policy of persecution in Poland.**

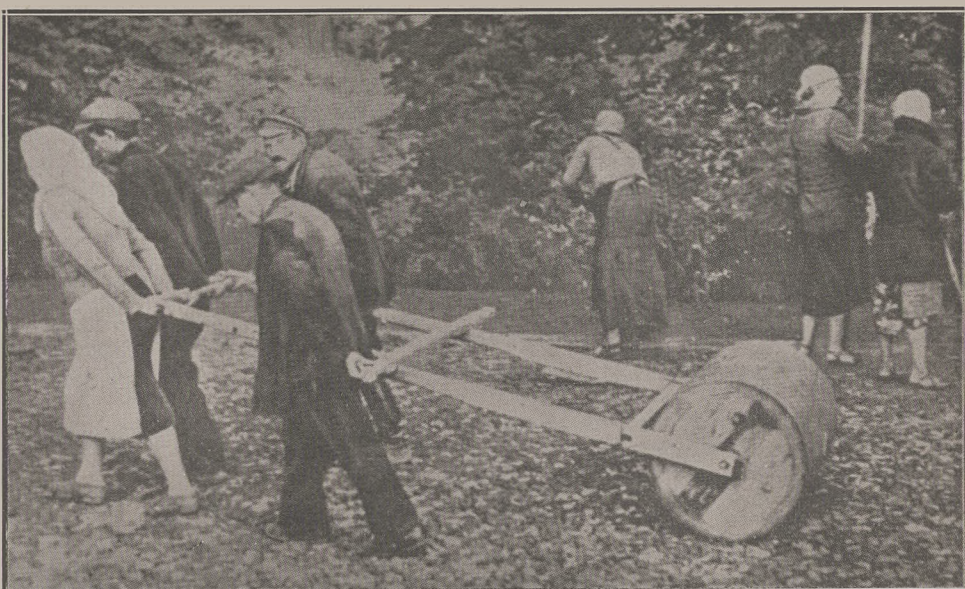
They were immediately suppressed, their offices seized by the Gestapo and their property confiscated. The membership of the Polish Trade Unions had been nearly one million, the greater part belonging to the free Unions, affiliated to and co-operating with the Labor Parties. The Polish Trade Union movement was extremely active and well-organized. The Germans have crushed all these Unions, not even attempting to "Nazify" them as in other occupied countries.

### **MACHINE-GUNS AGAINST STRIKERS**

Any organized Movement is now impossible. Prison, the concentration camp, even execution, is the Nazi reply to any attempt to improve the lot of the workers by organized or strike action. Some strikes broke out in July, 1940, but were suppressed. A bigger one began in December in the tramway workshops in Warsaw, when the workers, provoked by extremely low wages, insufficient to support the needs of life, came out in protest. The workshops were surrounded by S.S. guards and, under the threat of being machine-gunned, the workers were forced to yield. Two managers and forty workers were arrested and deported and their ultimate fate is unknown. They have never been seen again.

### **FORCED LABOUR**

Labor compulsion was one of the first decrees imposed upon Poland by the Germans. Hardly a month after the occupation of Warsaw, compulsory work was introduced for all men between the ages of 14 and 60. This was soon followed by restrictions upon the free movement of workers from one employment to another. They were directed by the authorities to factories and workshops where they might be most needed and no



Women and Men at Forced Labor repairing German roads.

worker might take a post or leave it without a permit. Fines without limit or imprisonment may be imposed where wage increases or improvements in conditions are either requested or promised.

Registration of all males was immediately carried out, followed by the registration of unemployed women. By the middle of 1940, all males born between 1915 and 1924 had been registered.

The so-called "Gouvernement-General" (Central Poland, approximately one-quarter of the territory of the Polish Republic, with a population of about 14 millions) was included in Goering's four-year plan. One million Polish workers were to be recruited in this area for work in Germany, three-quarters for agriculture and one-quarter for industry. The "Gouvernement-General" was split up into a number of regions, each of which had to provide its quota of workmen. Efforts at recruitment failed, Polish workers refusing to enlist for work in Germany in spite of their being unemployed and the promise of higher wages in Germany.

From time to time the police and the Gestapo arranged "round-ups" in the big cities, arresting thousands of passers-by and raiding houses, each time collecting and deporting several thousands of able-bodied men for labor in Germany and imprisoning hundreds of recalcitrants in concentration camps. Those who tried to escape were simply fired upon.

### **POLES AS SLAVES AND OUTCASTS**

In Germany the Polish worker is treated as a slave. On his left breast he must carry a yellow mark in a violet frame embroidered with a large P, and Germans are open to punishment for showing even the slightest sympathy. The newspaper "Duerener Zeitung" of April 23rd, 1941, quoted by  
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political parties in their fight for genuine democracy and against totalitarian tendencies. The Labor Union Council in the industrial cities often took part in municipal activities, running candidates of their own and participating in municipal administration to secure good and honest local government in the large workers' agglomerations.

The Polish Labor Unions were open to all working people irrespective of creed or race. There was a place for every worker in their organization. Members, who differed from the majority by their language, had a free choice between common membership with the Polish-speaking members in joint branches, or the constitution of separate branches where the minority language was used in the proceedings. Most Yiddish-speaking workers, decided for the latter, and constituted separate Jewish branches within the general labor organization, while Polish-speaking Jews remained in the Polish-language branches. The Jewish branches were particularly remarkable by their educational activity. The same applied in some degree to Ukrainian-language branches.

### **DIFFICULTIES OF POLISH LABOR UNIONISM**

Unfortunately, Polish Trade Unionism was not able to give the community everything it might have given. It was greatly hampered by political obstacles. The major obstacle was the lack of unity. In Poland, as well as in other Central European countries, the various political parties organized Labor Unions of their own, which competed with the regular Unions. The political Labor Unions did not serve the real interests of the workers; their main object was to function as subsidiary political organizations for their respective parties and as electoral agencies. However, to justify their existence, they had to develop some specific Labor activity. Often their good will in this respect was rather dubious, as many branches of these political unions were only camouflaged company unions; but in some instances they were able to get results which brought them new members. This did not help the regular unions. It is not easy, as was the case in the Warsaw street-car dispute in 1935, to do good union work in a shop where as many as eleven competing unions are engaged in a jurisdictional controversy. Even if the number of competing unions is smaller—the difficulties of working under such conditions are tremendous. But, finally the solidarity and honesty of the regular Unions overcame these difficulties. After 1936 whole branches began to leave the political unions and to acquire charters from the regular Polish Labor Unions Congress. Membership of other irregular unions decreased rapidly, so that at the outbreak of the war the Unions affiliated to the Congress were almost the only ones that counted.

The anti-labor prejudices of some administrations under the former Polish regime, caused the Labor Unions Congress a great deal of trouble. The regular Polish Labor Unions were always independent and did not interfere in politics. However,

their wholehearted support of anti-totalitarian activities were generally known. At a time when the organized labor movement was strongly attacked by an administration with dictatorial tendencies, the Polish Labor Unions had to withstand much hostile pressure for opposing the administration's anti-democratic measures. They were even subjected to attempted disruption. Employers and police joined in trying to persuade workers to leave the regular Labor Unions and to transfer to company or irregular unions. The arguments used were not always verbal. Yet the Polish labor unions were able to overcome all these difficulties, and emerged stronger than before from the fight for union rights.

### **SITUATION AT OUTBREAK OF THE WAR**

The last few years before the outbreak of the war, were particularly prosperous for Polish Labor Unionism. The rapid growth of industry, combined with a slow but steady rise of commodity prices created particularly favorable conditions for increasing membership. The total union membership was about 700,000 in 1935; when war broke out it was roughly a million. One worker out of every two had joined a Labor Union.

The Miners' Union was by far the strongest and biggest of all the industrial Unions. Mr. Jan Stanczyk, now Polish Minister of Labor and Social Welfare, has been its Secretary General for many years. He contributed largely to the power and development of this Union to which he devoted most of his activity.

The next in importance although not in membership, was the Metal Workers' Union, whose Secretary General, Topinek, was killed in action during the siege of Warsaw. The Railroad Workers and Textile Workers' Unions, followed the Miners in membership numbers.

A strong participation of "white-collar" workers was a characteristic feature of the Polish Labor Union Movement. This branch of the Labor Movement was at one time a happy hunting-ground for company Unions, but later the regular Unions prevailed. The school-teachers were particularly well organized, and constituted the backbone of the "white collar" Labor Movement.

The Polish Labor Unions Congress was headed by Mr. Jan Kwapinski, Mayor-Elect of Lodz, Poland's second largest city. Mr. Kwapinski, was deported to Russia in 1940 but since the Polish-Russian pact has been in Moscow doing useful work for the Allied cause. Mr. Jan Stanczyk, Polish Minister of Labor and Social Welfare, was Secretary General of the Labor Unions Congress. Mr. Stanczyk is in the United States to take part in the Conference of the International Labor Office.

It is true that the Germans have destroyed or rather driven underground the Polish Labor Unions, but their spirit is alive. Polish Labor Unions will do their part in the building up of the Poland that is to be, a Poland worthy of the ideals for which Polish Labor has always stood.



# POLISH LABOR LEGISLATION

## MOST ADVANCED IN EUROPE

**P**OLISH Labor legislation was amongst the most advanced in Europe. Labor was protected by carefully drafted laws passed in the early days of Polish parliamentary activity.

As an initial step, compulsory workers insurance was introduced, based on experience gained in the Polish *Krankenkasse*, or health fund, that existed under Austrian rule prior to the last war. In case of sickness a worker received free medical and dental advice and medicines, as well as hospital treatment when needed. There were also sanatoriums for chronic cases. During illness the insured also received financial support which under Polish law continued for 26 weeks at the rate of 60% of the workers' regular pay. His family was also entitled to free medical treatment.

The State Insurance Fund built hundreds of circulating dispensaries, many new hospitals and launched great prophylactic drives. The modern hospitals, their up-to-date equipment, were a sign of the rise of Poland after the war of 1914.

Compulsory accident insurance was next introduced in all trades and industries, and finally old age pensions. The latter were of recent introduction and the pensions were relatively low. But health and accident insurance played a very important role, as did insurance against unemployment which was compulsory except in the case of factories employing less than five workers.

Social Welfare legislation was on the same ad-

*In Poland, about 14,000,000 free medical consultations were given to employees and workmen by the State Health Insurances, every year. Medicines were furnished free to all patients.*

vanced scale, especially laws for the protection of women and children prohibiting night work and employment in industries detrimental to health.

Poland was one of the first States to introduce the compulsory eight hour day, indeed, a seven hour day was later established for miners and underground workers.

Paid vacations for all workers were compulsory, adults receiving eight days, and youths fourteen days a year.

Fourteen days notice was compulsory in case of dismissal, and from the very inception of the Polish State, labor inspectors were appointed to inspect factories and see to the enforcement of the Labor laws.

As regards employees, Polish law was even more liberal. For instance, employees had one month's paid vacations every year, and were entitled to three months notice in case of dismissal. Polish labor unions were always careful to see that all these laws were really enforced.

### ADULT EDUCATION FOR WORKERS IN POLAND

**M**ORE attention was bestowed on adult education in Poland than in any other country. Under Czarist rule, education in the Polish language was virtually prohibited and it was only under Austrian occupation that Polish culture could be developed in comparative freedom.

The organization of adult education was thus the first task of the Republic of Poland, and a legal basis was given to the invaluable work that progressive Polish intellectuals had already done in this field before the first world war. Of great assistance was the well-organized People's University Association in Cracow, the oldest Polish organization for adult education, after the Society for Popular Schools. The People's University was supported

by the elite of the Polish educated classes—scientists, writers and liberal politicians.

A Polish Workers Educational Association was founded and branches were organized in all important industrial centers and in many industrial areas.

The Polish Workers' Educational Association devoted itself principally to night classes and lectures on social and scientific subjects. Educational excursions were also arranged. At a somewhat later stage, these lectures and classes were followed by the establishment of social science schools in some of the larger centers, as for instance, the Workers' School for Social Science in Cracow, from which an average of 150 workers graduated every year.

*An average of 20,000 factory inspections were made by Labor Inspectors in Poland every year from 1920 to 1939.*

*One million workers were organized in Poland as members of free Labor Unions.*

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the International Transport Federation, states that a farmer of Eschbach, near Frankfurt, was sentenced to two months' imprisonment for having sent a friendly letter and some presents to a sick Polish prisoner of war who had worked for him. The "Völkischer Beobachter" recently reported that a German woman at Überlingen, near Constanze, was sentenced to 30 months' hard labour because she decorated a Christmas tree for the Poles who worked at her parents' farm. The "Allensteiner Zeitung" of February 1st, 1941, reports that the wife of a German baker at Allenstein was fined for giving bread to a Polish civilian worker.

Numerous contributions are deducted from the meagre pay of the Polish worker in Germany, including a 2 per cent deduction for the Nazi "Labor Front," although the Poles are not admitted to it and enjoy none of the benefits accruing from membership. In addition to their ordinary share in taxation, Polish workers in Germany have to pay an additional 15 per cent of their wages as super-tax.

No better is the lot of Polish workers in the territory incorporated in the Reich (Western Poland with approximately 11 million inhabitants). Not only are they exploited to the utmost, but very often deported to Central Poland (the "Gouvernement-General") or to Germany. Those allowed to remain at home are paid 20 per cent less than the Germans, in industry and commerce. Agricultural workers work one hour and a half longer each day than the Germans. Germans are paid 0.45 mark per hour overtime and even other foreign laborers receive 0.22 mark, but the Poles receive nothing. The wages of the Polish agricultural worker are only two-thirds those of the German agricultural worker.

Any protest against these conditions is severely punished. Death sentence is often passed for "crimes" such as striking a German farmer or employer. Such a case at Poznan was reported in the "Ostdeutscher Beobachter" of May 7th, 1941.

### GERMANS—THE MASTERS

This is the application of the policy outlined by Gauleiter Greiser in a recent speech at Wielun. "Our task is not merely to administer these Eastern

areas but to win them over so that they may belong to Germany for all time. Never again may a 'foreigner' possess property here. Only the Germans shall be owners and masters and the Poles forever our servants."

In the "Gouvernement-General" itself, a new form of forced labor has been recently introduced under the name of "Baudienst" (Building Service). Under this rather euphemistic title of "building service," the Germans tried to mobilize entire classes of young men for their various needs, including even work of a military character. Young men between the ages of 16 and 25 are the most in demand. The working hours are extremely long and in every way the service resembles military conscription.

In order to assist control of the labor market, the Germans introduced special labor cards on December 1st, 1940. This is a kind of passport, without which no work or ration-card may be obtained. The system covers the entire population, except agricultural workers, municipal employees and domestic servants. These identity cards facilitate labor compulsion and transfer of workers. Very frequently a period of forced labor is added to a fine, especially in the case of peasants, for such acts as collecting wood from the forests.

### SOCIAL LEGISLATION DESTROYED

In theory most of the old Polish laws are still in force. In practice they are not applied.

The 48-hour week has been abolished. On paper, the old law still holds good, but in fact the men must work at least 10 hours per day for the same amount of wages as pre-war, despite the fact that purchasing-power, as a result of higher prices, has considerably decreased.

Polish workers formerly enjoyed the right to holidays with pay. By a law passed in 1922, all workers were entitled, after one year's continuous employment, to eight days' holiday with pay and after three years of continuous employment, to 15 days. Non-manual workers — office employees, clerks, shop assistants and the like — had one month's holiday with pay annually after one year's continuous employment with the same firm. An employer refusing to give a holiday was liable to a fine or even imprisonment. The Germans abolished the right of the workers to a holiday and left it to the discretion of the employer to grant it or not.



Front Pages of the Polish Underground Press



Such a holiday, not to exceed six days, may be granted after three years' continuous employment.

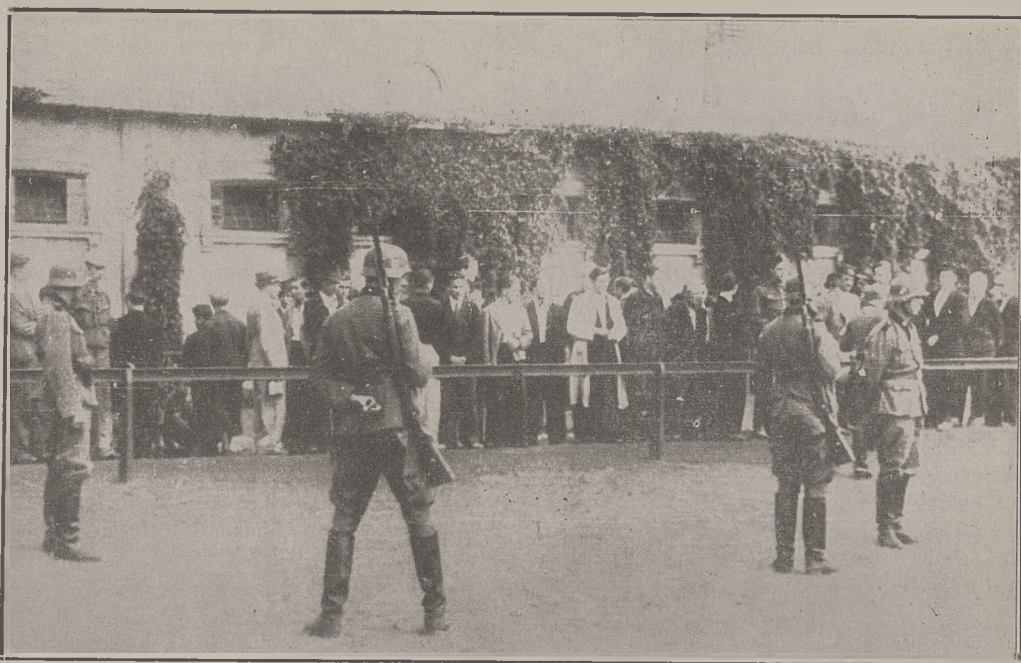
There was also in existence a law providing for two weeks' notice to workers in industry and three months' notice to clerical and supervisory staffs. This regulation has also been repealed by the Nazis.

Of special importance to the workers in Poland before the war was the law concerning factory inspection. The factory inspector combined the offices of inspector and conciliation officer and was really the good friend of the worker, to whom the latter could turn for advice and assistance where his work was of an unduly arduous or hazardous character, or where his employer was not acting in compliance with the law. **All inspection of factories has been stopped by the Nazis and the powers under the old law have been vested in the German administration.**

The pre-war Government of Poland respected the right of collective bargaining by the Trade Unions. The system of fixing wages and conditions by agreement between the Unions and the employers was very widespread. All this has been suppressed by the Germans and special wage-tariffs have been instituted. These tariffs vary greatly as between Germans and Poles. **The minimum for the Germans is double that for the Poles.**

Such invaluable bodies as the Joint Industrial Councils for Industry and Agriculture have been completely swept away. The Industrial J.I.C. was a body called in cases of big disputes and its decisions were subject to enforcement at the discretion of the Ministry of Labor. The Agricultural J.I.C. held a statutory meeting each year to settle, for the different districts, wages and conditions for the ensuing year.

One of the first acts of the German occupation authorities was the abolition of the Labor Courts, a useful institution to which were submitted all cases of litigation arising out of conditions of employment. These Courts had been authorized to formulate decisions in all disputes regarding wages, holidays and conditions of work, and were made up of a chairman and a representative from each side. The workers' representative was selected from



Awaiting Deportation to Forced Labor in Germany

a panel submitted by the Trade Unions. Legal costs were greatly reduced by the use of these Courts, as it was not necessary to employ counsel. This most effective means of protecting the worker against exploitation by the employer has also been removed by the Nazis.

The extensive insurance schemes in Poland have also been abolished by the Germans and the Polish worker deprived in great measure of the sickness insurance and other benefits which he enjoyed under the pre-war compulsory insurance schemes. He had been entitled to free treatment in hospitals owned and administered by the insurance concerns and to free dental treatment in centres also owned by these institutions. During any period in hospital, he received 10 per cent of his wages from the insurance institution, a further 25 per cent being allotted to his family. Under the schemes his family also were entitled to full medical advice and treatment. Almost all this has gone—free hospital treatment and allowances, everything — although both employer and employee must continue their contributions at the pre-war rates. Even the free daily allowance of two pints of milk to nursing mothers has been stopped.

These were not the only benefits enjoyed by workers under Polish law. In addition there were old age pensions at 60 or 65, invalidity pensions on a very liberal scale, premium-free insurance against accidents and occupational diseases providing for substantial benefits both for the injured or sick person and his family. These, with other protective insurances have been either eliminated or seriously curtailed by the German authorities.

## STARVATION WAGES

The German wage policy has been to stabilize rates, as far as possible, at the levels ruling during the few weeks prior to the war. These wages now represent only about one-third of their pre-war purchasing power.

A Warsaw tramway employee at present earns about \$10 per week, the present purchasing power of which is only about \$3. Railway shopmen's wages have been reduced to about \$5 per week, workers under public works schemes about \$5 per week.

The worker eats much less than formerly, but any surplus earnings can no longer be spent on other necessities. **Food is strictly rationed and bread and potatoes are the only items of food regularly obtainable, and these in insufficient quantities.** Poles are not entitled to butter or lard and rarely obtain meat.

The Germans discriminate against the Poles in food distribution. Germans are allowed much more food than the people to whom the country rightly belongs.

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This is a brief but illuminating picture of German designs for all conquered countries. It is not within the scope of this short survey to deal with more than the economic and social aspects of the matter. To go into the intense suffering of the Polish workers as a result of the complete suppression of their political and cultural freedom, religious rights, etc., would entail considerably more space.

So far, not all German-occupied countries have been so cruelly treated as Poland, probably because the Nazis still hope for their help in waging war against the rest of Europe. Eventually, when the Germans deem their usefulness in this respect to be at an end, the other countries will suffer the same fate as Poland.

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*(Continued from page 5)*

moral and physical tortures inflicted by the German invaders, have given the underground movement a more systematic or "professional" aspect. Ever present, alike among workers, peasants and professional classes, is the tradition of Poland's century-long struggle for independence. As a result, Poles have entered into this most bitter struggle relatively well prepared. The Polish nation is having a very hard time, for Hitler has set out to destroy and annihilate it completely. Yet, despite great sacrifices, despite raging terror, the underground war is constantly increasing in Poland.

Not a day passes without news of sabotage in Poland. Not a day passes but the German press prints obituaries of German officers, soldiers, S.S. and S.A. and Gestapo men, who "died" suddenly or "disappeared" suddenly . . . Economic sabotage also is wreaking havoc in German industrial centers in Poland. Peasants expelled from the western territories set fire to their homes and possessions. That accounts—alas, for the frequent executions of hostages, when the saboteurs are not seized. The German press prints tales of a "secret black hand" in Poland.

This is the grim reality of Underground Poland, that has not surrendered, has not yielded — but stands inflexible in its determination and will to fight the Hitler plague to the very end.

One of the leaders of the Polish democratic front, M. N. Niedzialkowski, at the last conference of the Warsaw Defence Committee, refused to sign the act of capitulation—saying: "The Polish worker will never capitulate."

## V.V.V.

The underground movement by no means limits itself to active preparation for attack, when the time is ripe. It has assumed a gigantic task in keeping the people informed, in organizing the nation as an entity and in directing the whole life of the country, in face of the destruction of all forms of social, cultural and political activity. It is a great responsibility to lead a nation through a period of trial and tribulations where every phase of life is contaminated with German propaganda, continuously stressing "that Poles were born to serve the German 'Herrenvolk,' that 'Poland will never rise again—and has no choice but to accept her fate'."

German propaganda finds an effective and virile opponent in the well-organized Polish underground press which, by means of a chain-system of delivery is circulated in hundreds of thousands of copies. More than a hundred newspapers, political and educational, many of them illustrated, including also comic papers, are printed on hidden presses in Poland today.

These publications, of truly democratic and progressive spirit, are most influential. They meet with the general support of the Polish people. Democracy is the watchword of the workers, peasants and large groups of professional Poles. The importance of the work done in this respect by the workers' underground movement cannot be over-estimated. Among the racial minorities, the underground movement has been led principally by Jewish workers, in close collaboration with Polish national leaders.